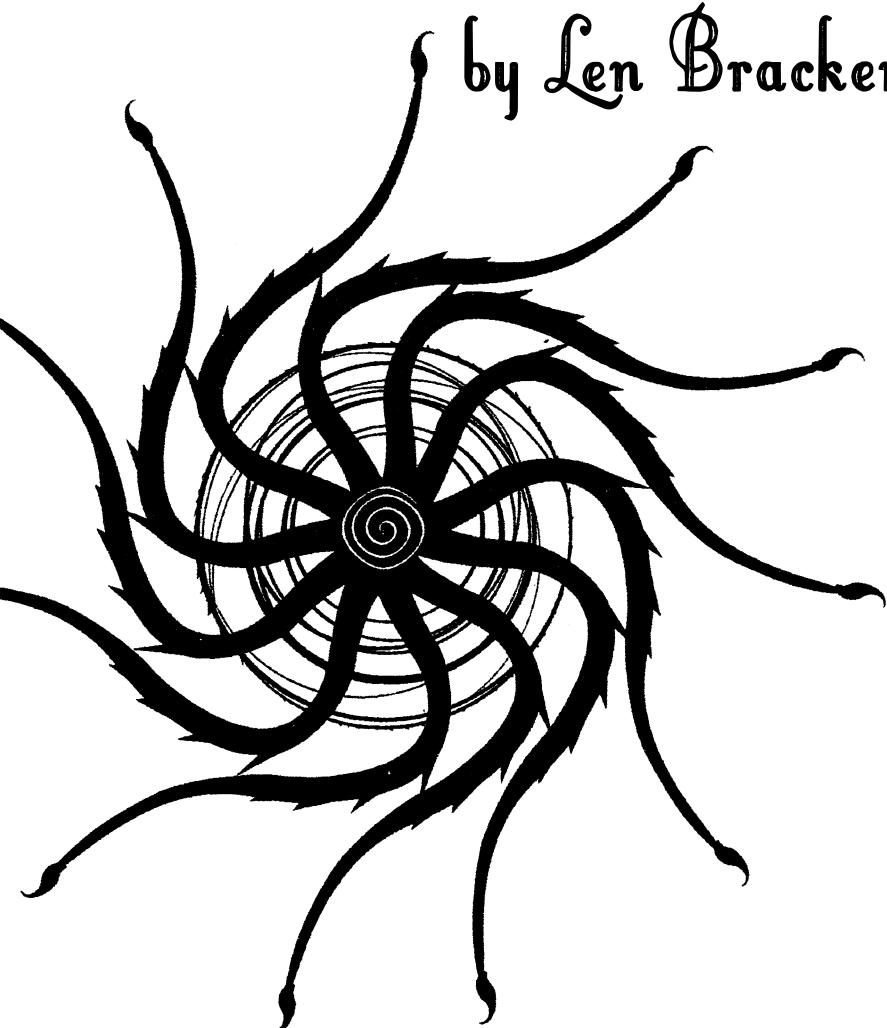


Solar Economics

by Len Bracken



Solar Economics

1

"All that glitters is gold," etc. etc. Wealth is energy and earth is ruled by the sun; if not by its gifts of heat and light, then by its effects of chance and surprise. Economics is a flimsy hoax."

We laugh a malicious laugh with Heraclitus. Malice is how he handled Homer and Hesiod, and it's the art we use to crush the cancerous art of economics. We trust Heraclitus – his words are blazing meteors in trajectories across time – when he tells us, "All is generated by fire, all is exchanged with fire, all is consumed by fire.... The breath of the sun is the breath of life and death."

Our eyes turn away from the dazzling sun, just as our thoughts turn away from death. Neither death nor the sun can be looked at without flinching.

We're explosions of energy whose thoughts must drift as far as the nearest star for our imaginations to stretch to the point that we can know what we want – right here, right now. Use the heavens as a scale with which to measure human history. Glorious events and imperial conquests are represented by political-economists as the outcome of grand plans; they are usually driven by insane passions. Humanity is mirrored in fire. New passions are formed when old ones are destroyed.

2

It's easy to see that the meager ideas of economics were never relevant to our situation. Economics is one of the most durable lies in history, yet it continues without contradiction. Like the sun that continually feeds itself to produce the energy it squanders, societies and individuals reveal themselves by their waste – not by what they do out of fear of hunger.

What passes for economics is a fraction of the wealth of the world. This restricted economy looks at the bank, the factory, and the sham of supply and demand equilibrium. The solar economy includes the heat of the blood that spurts from the open chest of the victims sacrificed to the sun in Aztec ritual, and the heat our bodies give off when we move a muscle in dance, laughter and festival.

There are many suns – here are two: one that appears small and close;

another that is many times larger than the earth, and very far away. Economics resides in the abstraction of all things being equal. All things are unique in regard to their irrepeatable time and place in the sun. Whereas money can always be replaced, you can't step in the same river of blood twice.

Ecological destruction and wage slavery prove that the restricted economy wages war on humanity. As incredible as it is unbelievable, economists, business people, workers – seemingly everyone – conspires for this economy. Self-destruction and self-sacrifice are inflated into something they aren't: profit. Fourier was surprised that Smith and Ricardo studied wealth with looking at morals. Their pseudo-scientific theories missed the fact that at the bottom of all economic activity, one finds the invisible hand of religion.

3

The full movement of wealth is what engages human passions – religion, mysticism, art, eroticism, revolution, war – moments when the idea of a future vanishes like smoke.

The solar economy includes the celebration of gods and the Dionysian pleasures of the poor. The profane and sacred merges in the solar economy, which is composed – in part – of all human activity. The solar economy encompasses the restricted economy, but the solar economy is infinitely larger because it includes all life under the sun. All life under the sun!

We are with Fourier when he said that the sun is the body of god – gasses bubbling and burning in fusion, the braided magnetic bands of fire as ferocious and hot as any hell you can imagine.

It's a good idea to know the best minds of your century: there aren't many. We are with Bataille when he posited the pineal gland as the embryo of an eye that allows us to see the sun vertically as it travels across the sky, a celestial eye at the top of the scull that grants us virtual vision of Helios floating in a cup of orange fire on the blue lagoon of noon.

Until the capitalists put their blot on history, everyone engaged in sacrificial expenditure: the dubious knights of industry of the 19th century consciously came up with the perverted idea of continually reinvesting their profits. This break in non-productive expenditure is marked by the potlatch of the Kwakiutl whose ruinous gift giving feasts were outlawed in capitalist-protestant Canada. So long as it remains above the plane of commerce, the gift is a crime against the restricted economy.

The Kwakiutl demonstrate that if disaccumulation of wealth is concentrated in gifts, then giving must be on a ruinous scale that defies economic

theory. Prestige naturally goes to the ones who sacrifice the most to their rivals, be those rivals other individuals, families or tribes. Self-destruction is more beneficial to society than is commonly supposed – it spreads wealth and levels the playing field. Capitalists practice a deceptive self-destruction that is ridiculously ineffective.

Unlike capitalists' miscarriage of the art of consumption, the Egyptian pyramids, the Islamic holy wars, Spanish bullfights, the roman circus, bonfires of the vanities, and even American gang wars correspond to majestic, non-productive expenditure. These are examples of glorious wastes of energy in the sense that very powerful emotions and high stakes are engaged in their creation. Majesty is the image of the grandeur of the world manifest in humanity.

In this century nothing corresponds to the grandeur of lightning, forest fires, tidal waves, volcanoes and earthquakes like the majesty of revolution. We're thinking here of Russia in 1905 and 1917, Bavaria in 1914, Spain in 1936, Hungary in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, France in 1968, Poland in 1980, China in 1989, not to mention large scale protests and tentative revolutions in Yugoslavia, Italy, Portugal, Holland, Mexico...all in the last thirty years.

Death takes us all: distinction goes to the glory left behind. Fortune favors those who howl "I'm on fire" – reason is simply what they call the passions that transport them. There exists an invisible, extranational empire of people who are fully conscious of being children of the sun and who recognize its secret logic. Everything eventually turns out to their advantage. The rest of humanity aligns itself with misfortune.

Freedom is at the apex of the temple of the sun. To worship the sun, simply engage in the anti-economic activity of your choice. This doesn't necessarily have to include the shark-like thrashing of flesh in a vortex of blood. Nonetheless, Bataille's metaphor of "laceration" for the female genitals isn't as appropriate as it first seems because it suggests that the ultimate gift is a wound. However glorious something may be, it's not great unless there's no purpose behind it. The erotic is perfectly useless, but it isn't the only adventure.

4

Capitalists are afflicted with the lurid compulsion to reinvest and multiply surplus value despite the recognition of diminishing returns, the limits of growth, overproduction, etc. Even the post-bourgeois capitalism of George Gilder (Ronald Reagan's favorite author) can't consume all the excess that is produced. The world is much too wealthy to suffer the stingy mode of consumption of capitalist economies.

In defiance of Ben Franklin's virtues of sobriety, frugality, and work, we have the moral license needed to encourage pseudo-wild, individual consumption. The sacrifice we make is with the slow death of work. Shopping is work because it always serves the economy. Both working and shopping have become less useful on the plane of human needs – they increasingly signify service to the economy.

Utility is something we take for granted. Look round you - there is much more than enough of what is useful to sustain our lives. What concerns us is the luxurious. We agree, again, with Fourier who ranked luxury as the first passion. The erotic interlude, which is a highly nonproductive expenditure of energy, is certainly luxurious, but nothing is as luxurious as human death, no fetish so strong. We are drawn to work the same way that we are drawn to death, only not so much.

Its awful to die; worse to die without distinction, and worse still to be worked to death.

5

The quantitative aspect of quality is impossible to calculate. Capitalist societies may appear to consume more than pre-capitalist societies, but there is a distinctive qualitative difference in the modes of consumption. Even the seemingly unproductive forms of consumption of alcohol and tobacco create profit-generating industries. One doesn't have to be a Mandeville to understand the economic benefits of self-destruction.

Another great mind of our century is Debord, whose theoretical developments can be reconciled with Bataille. The restricted economy is the disdainful world of commodity and its image, the world of the spectacle-commodity. The abstract ideology of consumption transgresses utility value AND serves the spectacle-commodity the way prayer serves a church, only much more. The belief system that supports industrial production of commodities, commerce and consumption, is based on a non-discerning visibility: what is good appears and what appears is good.

The useless is what is sovereign because it doesn't serve anything. Uselessness is rare in the world of the commodity-spectacle where life is a vicious cycle of work-shop-watch television-sleep. Uselessness is less visible than what is useful. Utility may be relative, but it certainly describes the cheap products that invade our space, and the gestures and expressions of celebrities (who have themselves slipped under reality) that invade our conversations. What appears in the spectacle and also appears in our lives in any way – directly or indirectly – serves the commodity-spectacle nicely.

Vast stores of energy appear to be wasted on the dressing up of commodities. As the poet likes to say, “An American apple isn’t an apple,” but rather the spectacle of an apple for sale. This apple is unlikely to make the feast – it remains in the market as long as it retains its false shine. Using irrationality as a defense, Reagan’s apologist of capitalism – Gilder – would have feasting and potlatching be traits of entrepreneurs who assemble and distribute wealth. At least Gilder recognizes that the gift is the most burning issue in capitalist society, but this “giving” that is the “vital impulse” and “moral center” of capitalism is stingy – it gives nothing sacred. It should go without saying that profit is contrary to the idea of “gift”.

Capitalists can’t begin to compare their scanty losses to those of the chief who burns down his village to humiliate a rival chief. Commodities aren’t gifts that come to us by symbolic exchange, they’re the pollution that generates all pollution; they’re acquired by equivalent exchange, generally with the homogenous substance of money – the substance of our civil religion.

Money - all of it – is made out of thin air: the successive reflections of fools old as it turns on its axis and takes light differently. In other words, capital is an image that shares reality with being.

Capitalism is a global monopoly and for this reason it can’t lose enough: its loses are minor, its risks insignificant. What is lost in Washington is gained in Tokyo, and vice versa. To paraphrase Bataille in regard to the stock market: capitalists wouldn’t even play if they didn’t have to.

Out of necessity for revolution, we will allow the capitalists to continue their maniacal accumulation of energy for some time, but this accumulation will attain the limit of growth as it did in Los Angeles in 1965, and again in 1992. As capitalism approaches this limit, it will then begin to experience pure loss. Capitalism will be undone by the sun: this immortal star outshines the false lustre of the spectacle everyday – everyday is Sunday.

6

We’re inclined to say that gold is the blood of the sun, whereas Bjork would have it be its sweat. First inclinations are sometimes wrong, and sometimes best. For the Aztecs gold was the shit of god; for the Maya gold was the shit of the sun, which is to say the same thing with a slightly different shine.

Scatologist that he was, Bataille wrote: “The SOLAR ANNULUS is the intact anus of her body at eighteen years to which nothing sufficiently blinding can be compared except the sun, even though the ANUS is the NIGHT.” He was with Zarathustra who said “The night is also a sun.” Yet of all the bodily fluids, urine comes closest to describing the way the sun endlessly pisses on us

from a great height.

The solar cunt is the wild woman of the woods squatting from the lower branches of a giant redwood; her golden stream of piss dissipates in the air in puffs as her stomach contracts in laughter.

Think of the light and the heat that is lost by the sun – the blazing unilateral gifts – the incalculable radiation of molecules and particles of light. The sun consumes itself, it sacrifices itself in brazen disregard for death, and it demonstrates that the immortal lives while dying. To die while living is mortal, fatal.

Solar energy passes through all the living masses on the earth. Life is like electric current – inflows – outflows – movements of heat or light moving from one being to another like a sexually transmitted disease. These impulses of energy are always communication. We make the essentialist argument that WEALTH IS ENERGY. Energy is the base and end of all production, but it is also the communication of emotions in love, art and festivals. We can sing with joy to the sounds of the sun, even in the moments of emotional loss, as Dostoyevsky's novels conclusively demonstrate.

7

Plants and animals are the sums of energy of agricultural work. The energy we get from plants and animals through consumption goes into our activities. Even our inert products correspond to this energy dynamic. Chairs suspend the weight of our bodies, and a table keeps our wine within easy reach.

You say that the immense surplus energy that humanity creates is from inventions? No way, no how. Our tools are merely ways to capture and consume solar energy. This is a fundamental principle of life: the sum of energy produced by an organism is always more than that needed for its production. You don't believe us? Ask a biologist. Would a plant grow if it didn't acquire more energy than it needed? Would an organism produce waste if it didn't acquire more energy than it needed? No way, no how.

The energy put to use for useful ends permits life to capture solar energy, which easily creates the excesses of the living world. The sun continually bombards the planet with energy. Wealth is the biggest problem on earth. Again, ENERGY IS WEALTH.

The anatomists who named the solar plexus knew that this endless appropriation of solar energy brings us to life. Once again, to paraphrase Bataille: the sun engenders our excesses. Excess is the effect of solar light and heat. We are the effect of solar rays. We are excess.

For this reason we are with For Ourselves when they say, “wealth is other people.” We all have enough energy to entertain the troubles of others, and if we are truly greedy (in the expansive sense of the word) we consume others as we consume ourselves – with passion.

8

The sun gives heat without any return, as pure loss; the immense ocean of solar light drools on us as she consumes herself in lust. Solar Economics is founded on the principle of loss, or – to put it more precisely – on the disaccumulation of excess vital energy. The Solar Economatrix gives it away.

In the economics of life, more than is needed is always produced. Again, remember the heat our bodies give off, or our waste, which we like to forget. Here’s the tricky part: the excess energy must be used or lost. If used, this energy is used to make the system that created it grow, but this energy is never free from its origins: the sun. Energy only passes through us. We can only impede solar rays for a time.

Solar energy loses itself. We can delay, but never suppress a movement that wants to lose itself. We can stop the rays by accumulating them – by growing –, but endless growth is impossible. If nothing else stops growth first, death eventually pulls growth’s plug. When growth reaches the limit, the captured energy finds itself and loses itself.

The meaning of the sun is to give without calculating any return. The piss-yellow and blood-red rays of the sun stream out in every direction as if there were hoards of wild women of the woods in the treetops.

The globe loses the energy it can’t contain: it spins vertiginously and living systems grow at insane rates. We can subjectively know the living world as a whole, not mistaking the part for the whole, not taking oneself for the only reality. A slice of the whole only reveals the parts extreme limit of growth.

A particular limit is marked by a reaction with the living world as a whole. The death of an organism has a relative effect on the whole world, even though the world perceived by an organism is an entire world unto itself. When an organism dies, a world dies with it. If one organism dies, that doesn’t limit the earth’s swallowing up of the sun’s rays, nor does it limit the slow growth of the energy swallowed up.

Every organism expends its excess energy. Acquisition is sometimes difficult, expenditure is always easy. Some of our calories maintain life, the rest is surplus. A short time separates us from when surplus energy is squandered or turns to fat, which is intolerable. We decide how to lose

this energy, and the quantity of it. We often ignore what is self evident.

Fat reflects the repression of vital energy. There are as many reasons for this repression as there are fat people. Why can't they release this energy? A false fear of hunger? Of pain? Failure? Censure? They suffer from a severely limited sense of greed that wants only food, and forgets how easily energy can be released in communication, dance and sex. The obese who cant give their vital energy without what they feel is sufficient return are in a more feeble position than capitalists who, out of weakness, cant let go of their money without a profitable return or interest.

Squander more and more energy – give like the sun.

9

There may be readers who can't even dream of insanely squandering energy. Your rate of decline is greater than the young because you are no longer growing. You say "I'd never take the chance," but life itself is a risk. You must think that your vital energy is used up – or something? – because you constantly store up your vital energy. The funny thing is that you must still waste energy, but you lack the will to chance, to exchange by risk. You are relegated to the passive expenditure of energy.

We address those who have energy to burn, those who have reached the limits of growth and still have excess energy; those who throw themselves at chance and gamble the moment. Freedom is derived from risk.

The extreme limits of growth show us what an individual does with excess energy. This disaccumulation reveals the individual by manifesting his or her desires. The explosive liberation of sexual energy – as seen from the point of view of the living world – assures the duration and extension of life. For the individual, this explosion of sexual energy is pure loss. Sex is the sublime expression of the sun on earth. Man gives to woman, who gives by receiving. In the metaphysics of sex, woman is always an object to man, and vice versa; but we don't want to philosophize on reality, we want to realize philosophy. The way of the sun is known – if not recognized – by all. Philosophy is an easy lay.

10

Life and the sun are what is given. Life is a parasite of solar rays – the principle of life is to maximize the use of the excess energy given to it by the sun. The limit of growth is that of the possible. Each plant and animal occupies all the space it can; over time, space is occupied by a sequence of plants,

animals, and things.

Living nature multiplies its forms to the point of the inaccessible – what until then had been forbidden. The trunks and branches of trees grow foliage... below are grasses, insects... the same penetration of solar energy is in the oceans and in the mud at the bottom of the sea... Neutrinos pass through the entire earth, eluding all but our best efforts to capture one or two, by chance.

The earth is a kite blowing in the solar wind.

11

Human population will reach its limit. As humanity approaches this limit it'll be in the state of the individual who cant squander any more energy. There is always excess energy, and excess solar energy always finds a way to free itself. Life can't endlessly invest usefully, life consumes this constant excess as pure loss.

Before there were humans, life grew to climax – it attained certain limits. Surplus energy was invested to the point where growth was no longer possible. The excess energy went to the organism which had the force to waste it. Predators destroyed their prey and left the extra for scavengers.

It's impossible to imagine scarcity as the only obstacle to growth because a permanent state of scarcity cant result in overabundance. The limits of growth are gauged by an organism's capacity to use, invest and, finally, to squander its vital energy: we mean by this, an organisms powers of creativity and destruction.

12

Loss of energy is limited by the problems posed by its acquisition. Life can be cruel, but there are active and passive solutions to the acquisition and expenditure of energy, which is to say that there are active and passive ways to live. The passive solutions are painful for those who submit to them: the herbivore, or the worker. The active solutions are more interesting. As every businessman knows, expenditure – when it can be invested in growth – is just as important and difficult as acquisition. As every pirate knows, plunder demands risk.

The limits of growth are followed by massive losses. The senseless loss of life in plague, war and revolution is the only way humanity can self-destruct on a large scale. The last possibility is the supreme and extreme potlatch of

the proletarian masses offering themselves up to the “interests” for destruction – the “interests” are incapable of returning this humiliating gift, or are they? When the revolution comes, we should be prepared to divide the restricted economy into sectors:

- a) priority sectors – those sectors that will lead to the permanent transformation of historical conditions.
- b) Reconversion sectors – those sectors that can be diverted for the revolution.
- c) Parasitical sectors – those sectors that should be suppressed.

We don’t need a code of laws, we need a code of possibilities.

To paraphrase Kojeve: Humanity is born of desire. Action tends to satisfy desire, but only through negation – the destruction, or at least the transformation of the desired object. To satisfy hunger, food must be destroyed. All action is negation.

And of all the opiates, action brings the deepest sleep. As the spectacle fosters dreams about the necessity of work or war, dreams of vacations become necessary. Refuse to be satisfied with a life of cowardice and decay. Wake up to the necessity for revolution!

13

Humans use a large amount of the disposable energy on the planet. Some of this expenditure is for the end of increasing humanity and the rest is excess. It follows that the flux of energy on earth hinges on what humanity does with the disposable share.

The fact that humanity itself is the effect of the surplus energy of the sun is seen in the extreme wealth of its activities: the explosive liberation of excess energy. The energy freed by humanity in revolution flowers and makes itself shown in the most beautifully useless ways: we are still in debt to the constructivists, to mention one example.

To liberate energy, we must first seize it. In other words, waste presupposes consolidation. Humanity exploits the wealth on earth, and even extends life by manipulating dead material. The full import of this is beyond the scope of this lecture, but we must add that space programs tend to move away from the sun, away from life. In an inversion of the Icarus syndrome, their wings will freeze. Why build castles in the air when present day reality on earth already reflects the barbarism of some horrendous science fiction novel?

14

Capitalist rationality, frugality and the sobriety that characterized its early phase were invested in the accumulation. This accumulation was a break with the sumptuous expenditure of the feudal order, but at this stage of late capitalism, this investment can only be seen as having actually accelerated the expenditure of energy. To incessantly reinvest without consciously destroying some of what is useful, is to live in the clouds.

Accumulation may be far from its limits, but the overproduction of cheap commodities and unemployment and underemployment strike us as passive solutions. The investment of energy for the expansion of humanity can't absorb all the excess energy at humanity's disposal.

The superfluous is necessary on a scale that defies most imaginations. To really live, live fully. Everything we want for experiments and adventures is in the world. We call for an immediate rise in the pleasure of living by unleashing the human desire for exaltation and fanaticism in rebellion.

The active solutions to sumptuous expenditure are seen as "bad" by most people. Hence massive losses of solar energy are made by the few despite the general misery. This is why Bataille referred to this extra as the "accursed" or "guilty" share. Science – the current paradigm of prejudice (take your pick) – is in the service of capital, and is judged according to its effects on commerce. Solar economics must be judged by the miracles of the sun, by its effects on life. Solar economics is the art of disaccumulation.

15

As hilarious as it seems, the charade is maintained that the earth is poor, that humans must work. Work, at least, presents the possibility of revolution: we can either say "yes" to work, or we can say "no". Peter must know that his lack is Paul's surplus, or else he suffers from a lack of imagination. Peter: stop waiting – you might not be here an hour from now.

Orgies of energy produce surplus and scarcity. We don't make revolution to become poor. The most apparent form of abundance is the abundance of dispossession. We are dispossessed of our lives, yet we don't realize it because we are blinded by the forces of illusion. Revolution is the repossession of life in an orgy of energy.

Most people aren't conscious of what they do with their lives. They become fat or they go to work – in America they do both. We talk about the abolition of work, but in reality we can't imagine anyone stopping all their creative activity. He or she would have to be dead. Boredom is counterrevolutionary. Those who never work are never bored.

Solar economics adapts to all life, just as all life adapts to the sun.

16

We're spindles of fire burning with desire. It's laughable to put "effort" into one passion when we can easily abandon ourselves to several. Happiness resides in the possession of desires, and having the means to satisfy them. We can dispose of all the resources that we can get our hands on in a debauch of vital energy without any other end than our desires. If we don't, we will go from work to war.

Squander is the only way: squander our lives on our passions. Humans exist to expend the energy that accumulates on the earth in glory, glory and still more glory. We can't negate the desire we feel in the heat of our blood. Desire lives in us – it can't be separated from humanity. We're far from realizing what we can do with our passions.

Prior to the 19th century nobody would be considered "wealthy" if they prostituted themselves for money with "work". Loss, in our time, comes in the form of human intelligence, courage and life. The illusions of the spectacle forces humans to betray their essences as laughers, dancers, and givers of parties. It's human to liberate immense amounts of solar energy. It's human to burn. Should we fight, or follow, our destiny? The rage of the sun can be captured and freed by humanity in a glorious revolution against work, against nationalism and war...

Or...

...the rage of the sun can be freed – as has so often been the case – by the cowardly submission of humanity to war. Just as obsessive motivation leads to paralysis, inordinate production leads to stasis, or worse. Work, in its nearly ubiquitous context of nationalism, represents a prelude to war. And even if work were somewhere free of a truly repugnant nationalism, it would still represent class war.

Truth rides on the sun's rays – its abuse is punished as heavily as the production of economic lies. Hitler abused the solar symbol of the swastika and got scorched to death like a snake. We must choose between the "morality of laughter at the indecencies of love" (Bataille) (what Kundera called LAUGHABLE LOVES – his UNBEARABLE LIGHTNESS OF BEING is traced to Bataille's preface to MADAME EDWARDA), or the morality of war; the economy of passion or the economy of submission. We can remain submissive children and go back to war, or we can act as adults and press for revolution. Never work!

At the crossroads, fools choose moderation and the wise go astray. If we take the risk, we can turn the world into a playground for the last revolution: an experimental civilization of eternal festivals, a renewal of grandeur in everyday life.

The earth dilates at dawn when the sun touches the sea and a curtain of fire is drawn across the horizon. We throw worry to the wind and set off for the high seas where the countless smiles of sun-blessed waves plunge us into a dancing world. The real dangers of a world-in-chaos are worry and fear. For those who are forewarned, there are no dangers.

We can simply enjoy much more, and strive much less. The most natural way is the most durable, and by consequence, the strongest. Lets follow our passions to the end of new beginnings. The less we seek glory, the more it follows us.

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